



**United States Attorney's Office
District of Columbia**

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NEWS RELEASE

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Colombian National Arraigned on Charges of Providing Material Support to the FARC

WASHINGTON - A 32-year-old Colombian citizen, Luz Mery Gutierrez Vergara, who was extradited from the Republic of Colombia on Thursday, made her initial appearance today in federal court in Washington, D.C., to face charges for allegedly participating in a conspiracy to provide material support to the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, commonly known as the "FARC," announced Jeffrey A. Taylor, U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia, David S. Kris, Assistant Attorney General for the National Security Division, Jonathan I. Solomon, Special Agent in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation ("FBI") Miami Field Office, Anthony V. Mangione, Special Agent in Charge of the Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement ("ICE") Miami Field Office, and Chris K. Amato, Special Agent in Charge of the Department of Defense, Defense Criminal Investigative Service ("DCIS") Southeast Field Office. Gutierrez Vergara was arraigned and pleaded not guilty to the charges against her.

In September of 2007, a federal grand jury in the District of Columbia indicted Gutierrez Vergara, along with a number of her co-conspirators, on two counts: conspiracy to provide material support or resources to a foreign terrorist organization and providing material support or resources to a terrorist organization. The indictment alleges that Gutierrez Vergara was involved in a conspiracy to assist the FARC by establishing and personally serving in a logistical support and supply network designed to procure weapons, ammunition, high technology devices, money, and other materials and supplies, and to transport and deliver these and other commodities, including hostages, to and among the FARC.

The FARC, an armed and violent organization in Colombia, has been designated by the United States as a foreign terrorist organization since 1997. The FARC has been involved in murders and hostage takings, and was responsible for holding three Americans – Marc D. Gonsalves, Thomas R. Howes and Keith D. Stansell – hostage from February 2003 until they were rescued in a Colombian military operation in July of 2008.

The FARC is divided into seven guerrilla blocs, which are further divided into fronts. Gutierrez Vergara is alleged to be affiliated with the First Front. The First Front is a large and trusted FARC logistical network which was controlled by Gerardo Antonio Aguilar Ramirez, also known as "Cesar." Colombian law enforcement apprehended Cesar during the daring July 2008 hostage rescue. Gutierrez Vergara was arrested by Colombian military and law enforcement officials in February of 2008. Throughout the investigation, Colombian law enforcement and prosecution authorities worked cooperatively with the FBI, ICE and DCIS.

In August of 2008, the United States filed a formal request with the Republic of Colombia seeking extradition on these charges. The extradition request was subsequently granted by the Colombian Supreme Court, and then by the Colombian Ministry of Justice and Colombian President Alvaro Uribe.

If convicted of the charges in the criminal indictment, Gutierrez Vergara faces a maximum of fifteen years' imprisonment.

In announcing the arrest, U.S. Attorney Taylor thanked Department of Justice Trial Attorney David P. Cora of the Counter-terrorism Section of the Department of Justice, and Assistant U.S. Attorneys M. Jeffrey Beatrice and Anthony Asuncion, who are prosecuting this matter.

An indictment is merely a formal charge that a defendant violated a criminal law. All defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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